U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2006-106-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC50047

PROJECT NAME: Extension of Existing Power Line

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado
T. 1 S., R. 98 W.,
Sec. 29, SE¼SW¼;
Sec. 32, N½NE¼, SE¼NE¼;
Sec. 33, SW¼NW¼, SW¼, N½SE¼, SW¼SE¼.

APPLICANT: White River Electric Association, Inc.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional): None

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: This power line extension has been requested in order of serve the added electrical needs of consumers in the Stake Springs/Corral Gulch area of White River Electric Association, Inc. (WREA) current system and will be an amendment to right-of-way COC50047.

Proposed Action: The proposed action is for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a three-phase 14.4 kV power line to serve the added electrical needs of consumers in the Stake Springs/Corral Gulch area of the present system. This new line will extend from the Shell property on the Bar D Mesa through Federal lands and will terminate at the existing overhead single-phase line at the intersection of Rio Blanco County (RBC) #24 and RBC #91.

Because of the length and small conductor, the existing line cannot meet the electrical capacity needs in the area. Increasing the size of the conductor on the old line would mean adding and changing many poles to support the heavier line and the expenses would be very high. By tying the Bar D line to the Stake Springs line WREA would be able to add reliability to their electrical system, have the ability to do maintenance on these lines without taking an outage, and meet the electrical needs in the Corral Gulch/Stake Springs area.

The proposed route follows the existing fence line and a two-track road from the Bar D property to RBC #24. The power line will be constructed on the east side of RBC #24 down to the existing line at the intersection RBC #24 and RBC #91. The requested right-of-way width is 25 feet with a length of 11,332.0 encompassing 6.50 acres.

It is estimated that 38 poles spaced 300 feet apart will be needed for the new power line. Equipment to be used will be a 2 ton, 4-wheel drive digger/derrick truck, 2 ton 4-wheel drive bucket truck and a basic utility truck.

The term for this amendment will run concurrent with the original grant that has an expiration date of June 26, 2020. The terms, conditions, and stipulations of the original grant and a subsequent amendment remain in full force and effect.

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, the application would be denied and the present system would remain the same.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The present power line system doesn't have sufficient capacity to carry the load from increased consumer requirements.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: "To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values."

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The entire White River Resource area has been classified as either attainment or unclassified for all pollutants, and most of the area has been designated prevention of significant deterioration (PSD) class II. The proposed action is not located within a ten mile radius of any special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas. The air quality criteria pollutant likely to be most affected by the proposed actions is the level of inhalable particulate matter, specifically particles ten microns or less in diameter (PM_{10}) associated with fugitive dust. In addition, slight increases in the following criteria pollutants: carbon monoxide, ozone (secondary pollutant), nitrogen dioxide, and sulfur dioxide may also occur during construction due to the combustion of fossil fuels associated with construction operations. Unfortunately, no monitoring data is available for the survey area. However, it is apparent that current air quality near the proposed location is good because only one location on the western slope (Grand Junction, CO) is monitoring for criteria pollutants other than PM_{10}. Furthermore, the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) estimates the maximum PM_{10} levels (24-hour average) in rural portions of western Colorado like the Piceance Basin to be near 50 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu g/m^3$). This estimate is well below the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for PM_{10} (24-hour average) of 150 $\mu g/m^3$.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed power line route follows previously disturbed areas for much of its length. Surface disturbance will be minimal and adverse impacts to air quality should not be expected.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Re-vegetate disturbed areas with a BLM approved seed mixture as outlined in the vegetation section of this document.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed power line route has been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level with three cultural resources reported to be in near vicinity to the power line. One of the reported sites is no longer identifiable on the surface, one resource is a very limited lithic scatter with no visible surface features and one resource is an isolated find.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Provided that simple mitigation measures are observed there will be no impacts to any cultural resources and no loss to the regional archaeological data base.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

3. Poles may not be placed within mapped site boundaries nor may any materials be stored within the site boundaries.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: There are no known noxious weeds in the immediate project area. Cheatgrass occurs in the area of the proposed project in association with past unrevegetated areas of soil disturbance along roads and pipelines.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will create about 94 acres of new earthen disturbance, which if it is not revegetated with desirable species and /or treated with herbicides to eradicate noxious weeds/ cheatgrass, will be invaded and dominated by noxious weeds/cheatgrass, in

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no change from the proposed action.

Mitigation: See Vegetation Section below for seeding recommendations

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The majority of the proposed powerline extension would parallel a well-traveled county road with approximately 1150 meters following an existing two-track and fenceline. Vegetation communities surrounding the project area are dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush, with small patches of pinyon-juniper woodlands. There are a number of migratory birds that fulfill nesting functions in these habitats during the months of May, June, and July, with several species identified as having higher conservation interest by the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Partners in Flight program such as Brewer's sparrow (sagebrush), juniper titmouse, black-throated gray warbler and gray flycatcher (pinyon-juniper).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is unlikely the proposed action will have any measurable influence on affected populations of migratory birds within or adjacent to the project area. Construction of the powerline would represent a brief, low intensity form of disturbance that would not be expected to disrupt nesting activities of migratory birds in adjacent habitats regardless of construction timeframe. The proposed route runs immediately adjacent to an existing two-track and well-traveled county road. These areas typically assume little nesting activity within approximately 30-40 meters from the corridor. As proposed, work will commence in early to mid-July, near the time most young have fledged, and therefore should have negligible impacts on nesting success.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to further influence migratory bird nesting activity.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered animal species that are known to inhabit or derive important use from the project area. Historically (>15 yrs), the sage parks surrounding Bar D Mesa and 84 Mesa were occupied by greater sage-grouse, a BLM-sensitive species. Although these habitats currently do not support sage-grouse, there is potential for future recolonization.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Extension of the powerline as mitigated would have no negative impacts on special status species. The proposed action involves a relatively minimal loss of sage habitat in an area currently considered marginal for sage-grouse occupation - due to its isolation from current core populations. Equipping powerpoles with raptor deterrents would effectively eliminate raptor perching should sage-grouse recolonize the area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no potential influence on federally listed animal species under the no action alternative.

Mitigation: Powerpoles involved in this action will be designed to deter all raptor perching (i.e., crossarms and pole top) and remain effective in preventing raptor electrocution.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on populations or habitats associated with federally listed animals and would, therefore, have no potential to influence the status or application of applicable land health standards.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by this project.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: Surface Water: The proposed power line route is located primarily along the drainage divide between the Yellow Creek and Stake Springs Draw catchment areas. Stake Springs Draw is a tributary to Yellow Creek which is a tributary to the White River (stream segment 13b of the White River Basin). The White River is a tributary to the Green River which flows into the Colorado River.

The "Status of Water Quality in Colorado –2006" (CDPHE 2006b) and Regulation No. 37 Classifications and Numeric Standards for Lower Colorado River Basin (CDPHE 2004a) were reviewed for information relating to drainages within the project area. Stream segment 13b of the White River Basin is defined as the mainstem of Yellow Creek including all tributaries, from the source to the confluence with the White River. The State has classified stream segment 13b of the White River Basin as "Use Protected" and further designated as beneficial for the

following uses: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. The antidegradation review requirements in the Antidegradation Rule are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply. For this reach, minimum standards for three parameters have been listed. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 milligrams per liter (mg/l), pH = 6.5 - 9.0, and Fecal Coliform = 2,000/100 milliliters (ml) and 630/100 ml E. coli. Numeric standards for inorganic compounds and metals can be found within Regulation No. 37 Classifications and Numeric Standards for Lower Colorado River Basin (CDPHE 2004a).

Newly promulgated Colorado Regulations Nos. 93 and 94 (CDPHE 2006c and 2006d, respectively) were reviewed for information related to the proposed project area drainages. Regulation No. 93 is the State's Section 303(d) list of water-quality-limited segments requiring Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). The 2006 303(d) list of segments needing development of TMDLs includes two segments within the White River - segment 9b, White River tributaries North and South Forks to Piceance Creek, specifically the Flag Creek portion (for impairment from selenium with a low priority for TMDL development) and segment 22, tributaries to the White River, Douglas Creek to the Colorado/Utah boarder, specifically West Evacuation Wash, and Douglas Creek (sediment impairments). Regulation 94 is the State's list of water bodies identified for monitoring and evaluation, to assess water quality and determine if a need for TMDLs exists. The list includes two White River segments that are potentially impaired – 9 and 22. Segment 13b was not listed.

Ground Water: Ground water will not be directly affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Failure to successfully re-vegetate disturbed surfaces with preferred species may result in increased erosive potential and elevate sediment/salt loads to Yellow Creek, the White River and eventually the Colorado River.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Mitigate potential impacts to surface water by restricting non emergency maintenance activities on power lines when soils become saturated to a depth of three inches or more. In addition, revegetate disturbed surfaces with BLM preferred seed mixture as outlined in the vegetation section of this document.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: Stream segment 13b of the White River Basin currently meet water quality standards set by the state. Many of the upper tributaries which are ephemeral and flow in direct response to storm events do not meet the standards during periods of flow. Following suggested mitigation measures, water quality in the affected stream segment should continue to meet standards.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no wetlands or riparian areas potentially affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on wetlands or riparian areas.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no effect on existing wetlands and riparian areas under the no action alternative.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: Extension of the powerline would have no conceivable influence on the condition or function of wetlands and riparian areas, and therefore, would have no influence on continued maintenance of associated land health standards.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED: No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The following data is a product of an order III soil survey conducted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Rio Blanco County, CO. Table 1 highlights important soil characteristics. A complete summary of this information can be found at the White River Field Office. No "fragile soils" have been mapped near the project area.

Table 1:

Soil Number	Soil Name	Affected Acres w/in 30 m	Slope	Ecological site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
36	Glendive fine sandy loam	1.54		Foothills Swale	2-4	Slow	Slight	>60
73	Rentsac channery loam	5.5	5-50%		<2	Rapid	Moderate to very high	10-20
75	Rentsac-Piceance complex	38.41	2-30%	PJ woodland/Rolling Loam	<2	Medium	Moderate to high	10-20

Soil Number	Soil Name	Affected Acres w/in 30 m	Slope	Ecological site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
104	Yamac Loam	6.27	2-15%	Rolling Loam	<2	Medium	Slight to moderate	>60

36-Glendive fine sandy loam (2 to 4 percent slopes) is a deep, well drained soil, formed in alluvium and found along alluvial valley floors. Elevation is 5,800 to 7,200 feet. The average annual precipitation is 14 to 17 inches, the average annual air temperature is 42 to 45 degrees F, and the average frost-free period is 80 to 105 days. Typically, the surface layer is pale brown fine sandy loam 6 inches thick. The underlying material to a depth of 60 inches or more is very pale brown, stratified fine sandy loam that has thin lenses of loamy fine sand to sandy clay loam. The soil is calcareous throughout. In some areas the surface layer is channery fine sandy loam. Permeability of this Glendive soil is moderately rapid. Available water capacity is moderate. Effective rooting depth is 60 inches or more. Runoff is slow, and the hazard of water erosion is slight. The soil is subject to rare periods of flooding.

73-Rentsac channery loam (5 to 50 percent slopes) is a shallow, well drained soil located on ridges, foothills, and side slopes. It formed in residuum derived dominantly from calcareous sandstone. The native vegetation is mainly pinyon, juniper, brush, and grasses. Elevation is 6,000 to 7,600 feet. The average annual precipitation is 14 to 18 inches, the average annual air temperature is 42 to 45 degrees F, and the average frost-free period is 80 to 105 days. Typically, the surface layer is grayish brown channery loam about 5 inches thick. The next layer is very channery loam about 4 inches thick. The underlying material is extremely flaggy light loam 7 inches thick. Hard sandstone is at a depth of 16 inches. Depth to sandstone ranges from 10 to 20 inches. Permeability of this Rentsac soil is moderately rapid. Available water capacity is very low. Effective rooting depth is 10 to 20 inches. Runoff is rapid, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate to very high.

75-Rentsac-Piceance complex (2 to 30 percent slopes) is found on uplands, broad ridges, and foothills. The native vegetation is mainly sparse stands of pinyon and juniper and open areas of sagebrush. Elevation is 6,000 to 7,600 feet. The average annual precipitation is 14 to 18 inches, the average annual air temperature is 42 to 45 degrees F, and the average frost-free period is 80 to 105 days. This unit is 60 percent Rentsac channery loam that has slopes of 8 to 30 percent and 30 percent Piceance fine sandy loam that has slopes of 2 to 15 percent. The Rentsac soil is shallow and well drained. It formed in residuum derived dominantly from sandstone. Typically, the surface layer is grayish brown channery loam about 5 inches thick. The next layer is brown, strongly calcareous very channery loam about 4 inches thick. The underlying material is very pale brown extremely flaggy light loam 7 inches thick. Hard sandstone is at a depth of 16 inches. Depth to sandstone ranges from 10 to 20 inches. In some areas the surface layer is flaggy loam. Permeability of the Rentsac soil is moderately rapid. Available water capacity is very low. Effective rooting depth is 10 to 20 inches. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate to high.

The Piceance soil is moderately deep and well drained. It formed in eolian material and colluvium derived dominantly from sandstone. Typically, the surface layer is brown fine sandy loam 4 inches thick. The upper 5 inches of the subsoil is brown loam, and the lower 13 inches is

light yellowish brown loam. The substratum is very pale brown channery light loam 8 inches thick. Hard sandstone is at a depth of 30 inches. Depth to sandstone or hard shale ranges from 20 to 40 inches. In some areas the surface layer is loam or sandy loam. Permeability of the Piceance soil is moderate. Available water capacity is low. Effective rooting depth is 20 to 40 inches. Runoff is slow to medium, and the hazard of water erosion is slight to moderate.

104-Yamac loam (2 to 15 percent slopes) is a deep, well drained soil found on rolling uplands, terraces, and fans. The native vegetation is mainly low shrubs and grasses. Elevation is 5,800 to 7,100 feet. The average annual precipitation is 13 to 16 inches, the average annual air temperature is 40 to 45 degrees F, and the average frost-free period is 80 to 105 days. Typically, the surface layer is brown loam 4 inches thick. The upper 8 inches of the subsoil is brown loam, and the lower 10 inches is highly calcareous loam. The upper 26 inches of the substratum is very pale brown loam, and the lower part to a depth of 60 inches or more is pale brown loam. Permeability of this Yamac soil is moderate. Available water capacity is moderate to high. Effective rooting depth is 60 inches or more. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is slight to moderate.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Given the calcareous nature of the affected soils, dissolution of calcium carbonate may cause soil piping and gully formation if soils are further exposed to erosional processes. Construction of the proposed power-line may result in increased soil compaction which will reduce infiltration and permeability rates increasing the erosive potential of overland flows.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Utility truck traffic should be kept to a minimum to reduce the potential impacts of soil compaction. To further mitigate resource damage, timing of construction operations should be planned to avoid wet periods when soils are saturated (e.g. during spring thaw, after late summer monsoons).

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: At the present time, soils in the vicinity of the proposed action exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, landform, climate, and geologic processes. Following power-line construction, soils will continue to meet standards.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The powerline extension will cross a mixture of pinyon/juniper woodlands and Wyoming sagebrush parks.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: In terms of plant community composition, structure and function, the principal negative impact over the long term would occur if cheatgrass or noxious weeds are allowed to establish and proliferate on the disturbed areas resulting from powerline construction.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: Revegetation will commence immediately after construction and will not be delayed until the following fall.

Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas not necessary for production with Native Seed mix #3. Seed mixture rates are Pure Live Seed (PLS) pounds per acre. Drill seeding is the preferred method of application.

Native Seed mix #3		
Western wheatgrass (Rosanna)	2	Gravelly 10"-14", Pinyon/Juniper Woodland, Stony Foothills, 147 (Mountain Mahogany)
Bluebunch wheatgrass (Whitmar)	2	
Needle and thread	1	
Indian ricegrass (Rimrock)	2	
Fourwing saltbush (Wytana)	1	
Utah sweetvetch	1	

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial)*:* Vegetation in the project area currently meets the Standard on a watershed and landscape basis and is expected to continue to meet the Standard in the future following implementation of the proposed action.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There are no aquatic systems potentially affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action involves minimal surface disturbance and therefore would have no influence on aquatic wildlife or habitat.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no effect on existing aquatic wildlife or habitat under the no action alternative.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Extension of the powerline would have no conceivable influence on the condition or function of aquatic habitats or wildlife associated with them, and therefore, would have no influence on continued maintenance of associated land health standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The big sagebrush and pinyon-juniper habitats surrounding the project area are considered general winter range for big game. These habitats are typically occupied by both deer and elk from November through April.

Two small patches of pinyon-juniper woodlands are located along the section running northeast, where it deviates from the County Road 24. Both sections contain large trees, however due to the small patch size and relative open canopy, these stands generally do not provide suitable substrate for nesting raptors.

Nongame mammals and birds using this area are typical and widely distributed in extensive like habitats across the Resource Area and northwest Colorado; there are no narrowly endemic or highly specialized species known to inhabit those lands potentially influenced by this action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is unlikely the extension of the powerline will have any long-term negative impacts on big game. Powerline construction along an existing, well-traveled corridor represents a low-intensity form of disturbance which would likely result in, depending on time-of-year a temporary displacement for big game and non-game wildlife. As proposed, construction activities will be completed outside the critical timeframe with respect to winter timing restrictions for big game. Regarding forage and cover availability for big game and nongame species, the small amount of surface disturbance immediately adjacent to heavily traveled corridors would be inconsequential in scale and duration.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to further influence migratory bird nesting activity.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The project site meets the land health standard for terrestrial communities. Extension of the powerline as proposed would have no functional influence on attributes of community health.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management			X
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals		X	
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise	X		

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management		X	
Realty Authorizations			X
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses			X

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed action falls within the B6 Yellow Creek fire management polygon and is an area where wildland fire is not desired due to cultural resources and industrial infrastructure and suppression if the desired management response. The proposed action is primarily situated within the Wyoming sagebrush/grass fuel type with approximately 90 meters of the project traversing a sparse pinion-juniper stand in section 33 NESE. Sagebrush fuel type has a total fuel loading of approximately 2.5 tons/acre and the PJ fuel type has a fuel loading of approximately 9 tons/acre.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The project will add incrementally to the ever growing amount of industrial infrastructure which could be threatened by wildfire within the B6 fire management polygon. Electrical powerlines are a high priority for protection from damage by wildfire for county and federal governments due to the economical impact should these facilities be lost in the event of a wildfire. Powerlines are also amongst the most problematic infrastructure to defend due to their structural ignitability and the hazards to firefighters associated with smoke being a conductor of electrical current.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: A brush beater should be used to clear the sagebrush away from wooden power poles to a minimum distance of twenty feet to provide defensible space for firefighters in the event of a wildfire. The cutting blade should not be lower than 6 inches from the ground as measured from a flat surface to avoid surface disturbance which would create a suitable environment for cheatgrass establishment, which would cause a greater fuels hazard due to the flashy continuous loading nature of cheatgrass. Conversely, all soil disturbances created by construction and vegetation clearing should be reseeded as stipulated in the vegetation section.

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The area of the proposed power line extension is located in an area generally mapped as the Uinta Formation which the BLM has classified as a Condition I formation, meaning it is known to produce scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Since the proposed action involves relatively limited surface disturbance and then only where poles are placed there is a limited potential to impact fossil resources. Fossil resources could potentially be impacted during auguring of the holes for the power poles. It is difficult to inspect power pole holes for fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological sites, or for collecting fossils. If fossil materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear to be of noteworthy scientific interest
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not feasible)

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: The power line extension is to provide service to high consumer demand in the Stake Springs/Corral Gulch area and will be an amendment to WREA's exising right-of-way COC50047.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is for the construction, operation, maintenance of a three-phase 14.4 kV power line. This new line will extend from the Shell property on the Bar D Mesa through Federal lands and will terminate at the existing overhead single-phase line at the intersection of RBC #24 and RBC #91. The extension will provide more reliable service to consumers in the area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative the application would be denied and the situation would remain the same.

Mitigation: 1. The terms, conditions, and stipulations of the original right-of-way grant will be applied to this amendment and remain in full force and effect.

2. Unless otherwise agreed to by the authorized officer in writing, power lines shall be constructed in accordance to standards outlined in "Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power lines," Raptor Research Foundation, Inc., 1981. The holder shall assume the burden and expense of proving that pole designs not shown in the above publication are "eagle safe." Such proof shall be provided by a raptor expert approved by the authorized officer. The BLM reserves the right to require modifications or additions to all power line structures placed on this right-of-way, should they be necessary to ensure the safety of large perching birds. Such modifications and/or additions shall be made by the holder without liability or expense to the United States.

3. The holder shall supply "As-Built Drawings" of this powerline within 60 days of completion of the project.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in an area with a VRM III classification. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would be located along existing lateral disturbances (fences & two track roads) and several miles from a route (RBC 5) that would be traveled by a casual observer. A casual observer traveling in the area could notice the proposed action, but the view would not be dominated by the proposed action. The level of change to the characteristic landscape would be less than moderate and the objectives of the VRM III classification would be retained.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts.

Mitigation: None

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: This action is consistent with the scope of impacts addressed in the White River ROD/RMP. The cumulative impacts of these activities are addressed in the White River ROD/RMP for each resource value that would be affected by the proposed action.

REFERENCES CITED:

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC), 2004a. Regulation No. 37 Classifications and Numeric Standards for Lower Colorado River Basin. Adopted 1983 and Effective January 20, 2004.

CDPHE-WQCC, 2006b. "Status of Water Quality in Colorado – 2006, The Update to the 2002 and 2004 305(b) Report," April 2006.

CDPHE-WQCC, 2006c. "Regulation No. 93, 2006 Section 303(d) List Water-Quality-Limited Segments Requiring TMDLs," effective April 30.

CDPHE-WQCC, 2006d. "Regulation No. 94, Colorado's Monitoring and Evaluation List," effective April 30.

Conner, Carl E., Barbra Davenport, Dana Archuleta and Jim Conner
2006 Class III Cultural Resources Inventory Report for a Proposed WREA 14.4 kV Overhead Power Line (2.14 miles) in Rio Blanco County, Colorado for White River Electric Association. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden
1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archeologist	Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Melissa J. Kindall	Hazmat Collateral; Range Technician	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid; Wild Horses
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Water Quality, Surface and Ground, Hydrology and Water Rights
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Soils
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Vegetation
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Management
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
Keith Whitaker	Natural Resource Specialist	Visual Resources

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2006-106-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the proposed action with the mitigation measures listed below.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. The holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the holder is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the holder as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the holder will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the holder wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the holder will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the holder will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

3. Poles may not be placed within mapped site boundaries nor may any materials be stored within the site boundaries.

4. Power poles involved in this action will be designed to deter all raptor perching (i.e., crossarms and pole top) and remain effective in preventing raptor electrocution.

5. The holder shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by this project.

6. Mitigate potential impacts to surface water by restricting non-emergency maintenance activities on power lines when soils become saturated to a depth of three inches or more.

7. Utility truck traffic should be kept to a minimum to reduce the potential impacts of soil compaction. To further mitigate resource damage, timing of construction operations should be planned to avoid wet periods when soils are saturated (e.g. during spring thaw, after late summer monsoons).

8. Revegetation will commence immediately after construction and will not be delayed until the following fall. Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas not necessary for production with Native Seed mix #3. Seed mixture rates are Pure Live Seed (PLS) pounds per acre. Drill seeding is the preferred method of application.

Native Seed mix #3		
Western wheatgrass (Rosanna)	2	Gravelly 10"-14", Pinyon/Juniper Woodland, Stony Foothills, 147 (Mountain Mahogany)
Bluebunch wheatgrass (Whitmar)	2	
Needle and thread	1	
Indian ricegrass (Rimrock)	2	
Fourwing saltbush (Wytana)	1	
Utah sweetvetch	1	

9. A brush beater should be used to clear the sagebrush away from wooden power poles to a minimum distance of twenty feet to provide defensible space for firefighters in the event of a wildfire. The cutting blade should not be lower than 6 inches from the ground as measured from a flat surface to avoid surface disturbance which would create a suitable environment for cheatgrass establishment, which would cause a greater fuels hazard due to the flashy continuous loading nature of cheatgrass. Conversely, all soil disturbances created by construction and vegetation clearing should be reseeded as stipulated in the Item #8.

10. The holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological sites, or for collecting fossils. If fossil materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the holder is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the holder as to:

- whether the materials appear to be of noteworthy scientific interest
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not feasible)

If the holder wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or

the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the holder will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

11. The terms, conditions, and stipulations of the original right-of-way grant will be applied to this amendment and remain in full force and effect.

12. Unless otherwise agreed to by the authorized officer in writing, power lines shall be constructed in accordance to standards outlined in "Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power lines," Raptor Research Foundation, Inc., 1981. The holder shall assume the burden and expense of proving that pole designs not shown in the above publication are "eagle safe." Such proof shall be provided by a raptor expert approved by the authorized officer. The BLM reserves the right to require modifications or additions to all power line structures placed on this right-of-way, should they be necessary to ensure the safety of large perching birds. Such modifications and/or additions shall be made by the holder without liability or expense to the United States.

13. The holder shall supply "As-Built Drawings" of this powerline within 60 days of completion of the project.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance will be conducted by the realty staff every five years.

NAME OF PREPARER: Penny Brown

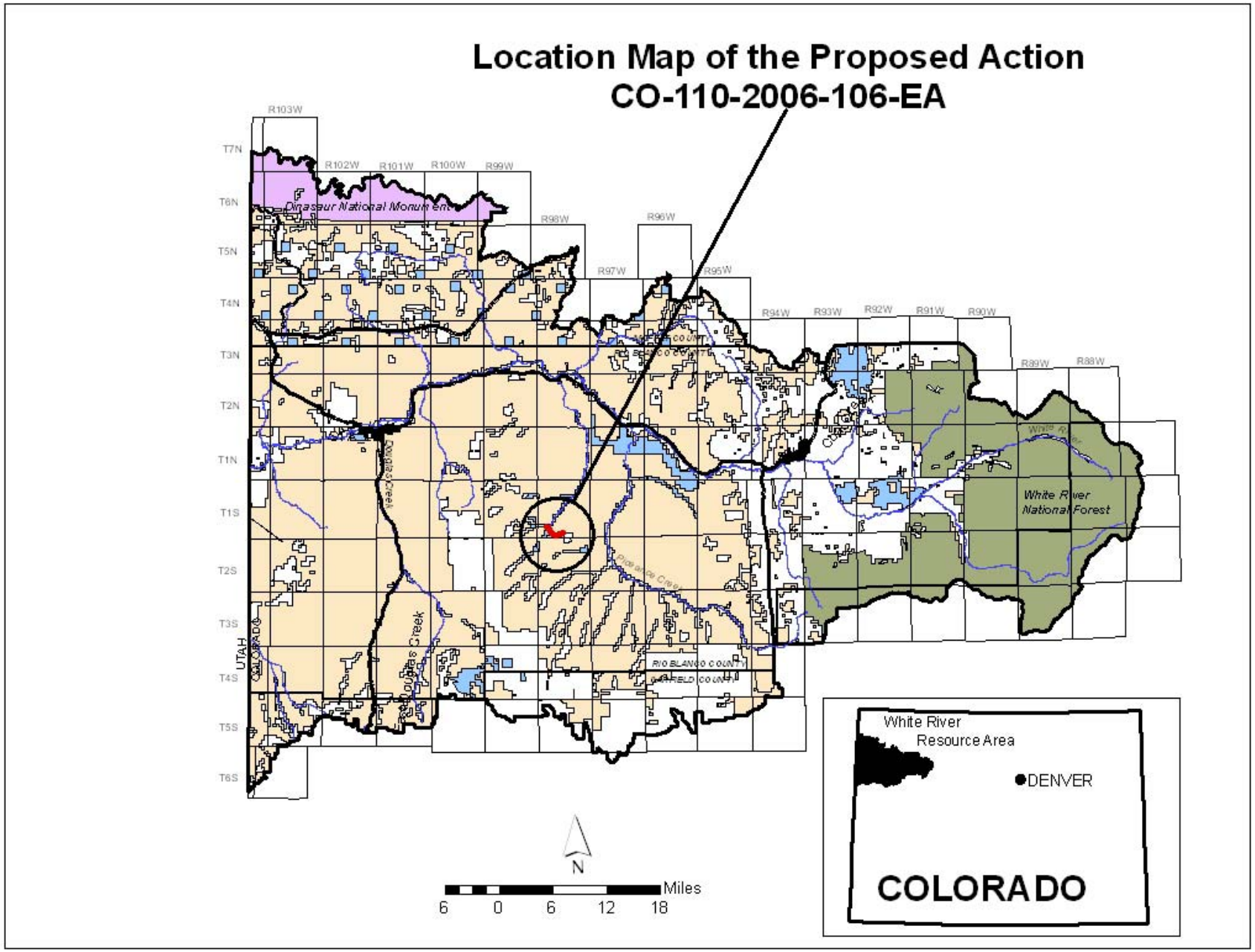
NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Warren Rhodes
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 6/29/06

ATTACHMENTS: General location map of the proposed action

CO-110-2006-106-EA 20


Location Map of the Proposed Action
CO-110-2006-106-EA
R103W
R102W
R101W
R100W
R99W
R98W
R97W
R96W
R95W
R94W
R93W
R92W
R91W
R90W
R89W
R88W
T7N
T6N
T5N
T4N
T3N
T2N
T1N
T1S
T2S
T3S
T4S
T5S
T6S
Dinosaur National Monument
Douglas Creek
Douglas Creek
Piceance Creek
White River
National Forest
UTAH
COLORADO
RIO BLANCO COUNTY
GARFIELD COUNTY
N
Miles
6 0 6 12 18
White River
Resource Area
DENVER
COLORADO